invader oligonucleotide present (the probe/target mixture). One half (4 tubes) of the probe/target mixtures were combined with 1 μl of 100 mM MOPS, pH 7.5 with 0.5% each of Tween-20 and NP-40, 0.5 μl of 1 M KCl and 0.25 μl of 80 mM $MnCl_2$, and distilled water to a volume of 6 μl. The second set of probe/target mixtures were combined with 1 μl of 100 mM MOPS, pH 7.5 with 0.5% each of Tween-20 and NP-40, 0.5 μl of 1 M KCl and 0.25 μl of 80 mM $MgCl_2$. The second set of mixtures therefore contained $MgCl_2$ in place of the $MnCl_2$ present in the first set of mixtures.

The mixtures (containing the probe/target with buffer, KCl and divalent cation) were covered with a drop of ChillOut® evaporation barrier (MJ Research) and were brought to 60°C for 5 minutes to allow annealing. Four μl of the above enzyme mixtures without the invader oligonucleotide was added to reactions whose products are shown in lanes 1, 3, 5 and 7 of Figure 33. Reactions whose products are shown lanes 2, 4, 6, and 8 of Figure 33 received the same amount of enzyme mixed with the invader oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:46). Reactions 1, 2, 5 and 6 were incubated for 5 minutes at 60°C and reactions 3, 4, 7 and 8 were incubated for 15 minutes at 60°C.

All reactions were stopped by the addition of 8 μl of 95% formamide with 20 mM EDTA and 0.05% marker dyes. Samples were heated to 90°C for 1 minute immediately before electrophoresis through a 20% acrylamide gel (19:1 cross-linked), containing 7 M urea, in a buffer of 45 mM Tris-Borate, pH 8.3, 1.4 mM EDTA. Following electrophoresis, the reaction products and were visualized by the use of an Hitachi FMBIO fluorescence imager, the output of which is seen in Figure 33. The very low molecular weight fluorescent material seen in all lanes at or near the salt front in Figure 33 and other fluoro-imager figures is observed when fluorescently-labeled oligonucleotides are electrophoresed and imaged on a fluoro-imager. This material is not a product of the cleavage reaction.

The use of $MnCl_2$ in these reactions (lanes 1-4) stimulates the true exonuclease or "nibbling" activity of the Cleavase® enzyme, as described in Example 7, as is clearly seen in lanes 1 and 3 of Figure 33. This nibbling of the probe oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:43) in the absence of invader oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:46) confirms that the probe oligonucleotide is forming a duplex with the target sequence. The

ladder-like products produced by this nibbling reaction may be difficult to differentiate from degradation of the probe by nucleases that might be present in a clinical specimen. In contrast, introduction of the invader oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:46) caused a distinctive shift in the cleavage of the probe, pushing the site of cleavage 6 to 7 bases into the probe, confirming the annealing of both oligonucleotides. In presence of $MnCl_2$, the exonuclease "nibbling" may occur after the invader-directed cleavage event, until the residual duplex is destabilized and falls apart.

In a magnesium based cleavage reaction (lanes 5-8), the nibbling or true exonuclease function of the Cleavase® A/G is enzyme suppressed (but the endonucleolytic function of the enzyme is essentially unaltered), so the probe oligonucleotide is not degraded in the absence of the invader (Figure 33, lanes 5 and 7). When the invader is added, it is clear that the invader oligonucleotide can promote a shift in the site of the endonucleolytic cleavage of the annealed probe. Comparison of the products of the 5 and 15 minute reactions with invader (lanes 6 and 8 in Figure 33) shows that additional probe hybridizes to the target and is cleaved. The calculated melting temperature (T_m) of the portion of probe that is not invaded (*i.e.*, nucleotides 9-26 of SEQ ID NO:43) is 56°C, so the observed turnover (as evidenced by the accumulation of cleavage products with increasing reaction time) suggests that the full length of the probe molecule, with a calculated T_m of 76°C, is must be involved in the subsequent probe annealing events in this 60°C reaction.

EXAMPLE 13

The Overlap Of The 3' Invader Oligonucleotide Sequence With The 5' Region Of The Probe Causes A Shift In The Site Of Cleavage

In Example 12, the ability of an invader oligonucleotide to cause a shift in the site of cleavage of a probe annealed to a target molecule was demonstrated. In this example, experiments were conducted to examine whether the presence of an oligonucleotide upstream from the probe was sufficient to cause a shift in the cleavage site(s) along the probe or whether the presence of nucleotides on the 3' end of the

invader oligonucleotide which have the same sequence as the first several nucleotides at the 5' end of the probe oligonucleotide were required to promote the shift in cleavage.

To examine this point, the products of cleavage obtained from three different arrangements of target-specific oligonucleotides are compared. A diagram of these oligonucleotides and the way in which they hybridize to a test nucleic acid, M13mp19, is shown in Figure 32. In Figure 32a, the 3' end of the upstream oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:45) is located upstream of the 5' end of the downstream "probe" oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:43) such that a region of the M13 target which is not paired to either oligonucleotide is present. In Figure 32b, the sequence of the upstream oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:45) is immediately upstream of the probe (SEQ ID NO:43), having neither a gap nor an overlap between the sequences. Figure 32c diagrams the arrangement of the substrates used in the assay of the present invention, showing that the upstream "invader" oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:46) has the same sequence on a portion of its 3' region as that present in the 5' region of the downstream probe (SEQ ID NO:43). That is to say, these regions will compete to hybridize to the same segment of the M13 target nucleic acid.

In these experiments, four enzyme mixtures were prepared as follows (planning 5 µl per digest): Mixture 1 contained 2.25µl of Cleavase® A/G nuclease extract (prepared as described in Example 2) per 5 µl of mixture, in 20 mM MOPS, pH 7.5 with 0.1 % each of Tween 20 and NP-40, 4 mM $MnCl_2$ and 100 mM KCl. Mixture 2 contained 11.25 units of *Taq* DNA polymerase (Promega Corp., Madison, WI) per 5 µl of mixture in 20 mM MOPS, pH 7.5 with 0.1 % each of Tween 20 and NP-40, 4 mM $MnCl_2$ and 100 mM KCl. Mixture 3 contained 2.25 µl of Cleavase® A/G nuclease extract per 5 µl of mixture in 20 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.5, 4 mM $MgCl_2$ and 100 mM KCl. Mixture 4 contained 11.25 units of *Taq* DNA polymerase per 5 µl of mixture in 20 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.5, 4 mM $MgCl_2$ and 100 mM KCl.

For each reaction, 50 fmole of M13mp19 single-stranded DNA (the target nucleic acid) was combined with 5 pmole of the probe oligonucleotide (SEQ ID NO:43 which contained a fluorescein label at the 3' end) and 50 pmole of one of the